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(Washington, DC) – Congressman Russ Carnahan (MO-03) today joined a majority in the House of Representatives in support of bipartisan legislation to provide health care to 11 million children in modest-income families. The Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Reauthorization Act was approved by a vote of 289-139.

“With rising unemployment, this children’s health bill is more critical than ever,” said Congressman Carnahan. **“In this recession, more and more American parents are losing employer-sponsored health care for their children and the need for this legislation is growing every day.”**

The State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too little to afford health insurance for their children themselves but too much to qualify for Medicaid. This bill will give states the resources and incentives necessary to reach and cover millions of uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid.

This bipartisan bill reauthorizes the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) through FY 2013 and preserves the coverage for all 7.1 million children currently covered by SCHIP, including preserving the coverage of 81,764 children in Missouri.

The bill also extends health care coverage to 4.1 million additional low-income children, who are currently uninsured.

The bill is fully paid for – raising the tobacco tax by 61 cents. Raising the tobacco tax also promotes children’s health – by discouraging children from smoking. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a 61-cent increase in the tobacco tax means that 1,873,000 fewer children will take up smoking.

“Covering more eligible children is not only the right thing to do – it makes good economic sense for taxpayers who will not foot the bill for costlier problems down the road,” said Congressman Carnahan. “In addition, a healthy child is better prepared for learning and success in today’s world economy.”